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# Key skills communication Level 3 - Women drivers

Tuesday 25th May 2004

## Source Booklet

- This booklet contains source material for the level 3 communication test, May 2004
- The test questions will be based on this material
- You must hand in this source booklet at the end of the test, along with your question paper and answer booklet

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The level 3 communication test will assess your ability to:

- select and read material that contains the required information
- identify accurately, and compare, the lines of reasoning and main points from the text and images
- synthesise the key information in a form that is relevant to the purpose
- select and use a form and style of writing that is appropriate to the purpose and subject matter
- organise relevant information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary when appropriate
- ensure text is legible and spelling, grammar and punctuation are accurate so that meaning is clear

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Ref: ComSB/L3/2.2/P8

## Women drivers 'better' claim proved

**F**emale motorists have won the right to be described as better drivers than men, thanks to a ruling by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). The ASA was called in after complaints about an advert from a Cardiff-based insurance company.

The poster campaign, from Admiral Insurance Services, Diamond Car Insurance, features a man having his hair coloured at a salon and states: "Some men will try anything to get cheaper car insurance". It continues: "Diamond only do car insurance for women because women are better drivers."

Passers-by, thought to be men, complained to the ASA that the advertisement was not corroborated by evidence that women were better behind the wheel.

However, the advertising industry's self-regulatory body, the ASA, has now ruled that the advert was accurate because readers would interpret it as meaning that women had fewer accidents and made fewer claims, proving what women have suspected and men have dreaded all along. In defence, Admiral offered insurance statistics which, the company claimed, showed women are better drivers because they make fewer and smaller claims. It also provided 108 sample quotations from 12 competitors' websites

which, it said, supported the claim through lower insurance premiums for women. "On average, insurance companies have to pay out more for claims by male drivers than female," said Jodie Williams, spokeswoman for Diamond. "Last year, male car insurance claims throughout the Admiral group cost an average of £1,721 and female claims cost an average of £1,411. Accidents involving men are likely to cause more damage. Women don't tend to go so fast and are usually less aggressive. Men are convicted of 92% of driving offences and 98% of dangerous driving offences."

The ASA adjudication read: "In the context of the advertisement, readers were likely to interpret the claim to mean that women had fewer accidents and made fewer claims. The advertisers had substantiated the interpretation of the claim, which was acceptable.

In 1998, a survey from the Automobile Association (AA) found men drive faster and break the law more often than their female counterparts, and are more likely to be killed. Men found one retort in the report; women drivers were twice as likely to have accidents at junctions than men. Neither industry figures nor advertising officials, however, are likely to settle one of history's most enduring assaults on reputation – the gender battle is set to continue for some time to come.

Source: [www.news.bbc.co.uk](http://www.news.bbc.co.uk)

## Document 2

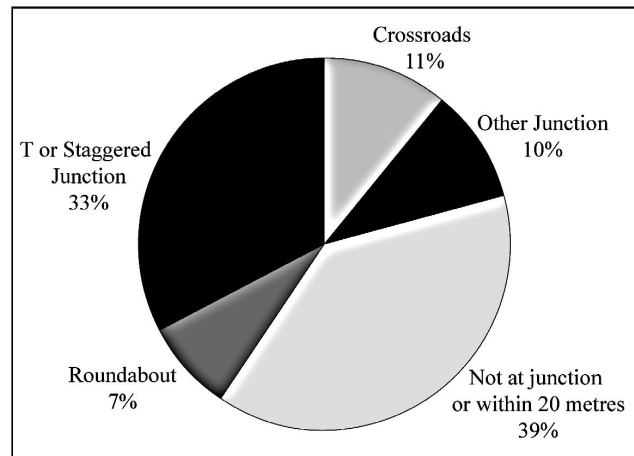
### Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions: Personal Injury Road Accidents

#### Where do accidents occur?

(i) 61% of personal injury accidents happened at or within 20 metres of a junction. Of these 33% were at T or staggered junctions and 11% were at crossroads.

(ii) 83% of junction accidents took place on built-up roads, where there are more junctions. Of the accidents which occurred away from junctions, only 57% were on built-up roads.

Figure 1: Accidents by Location

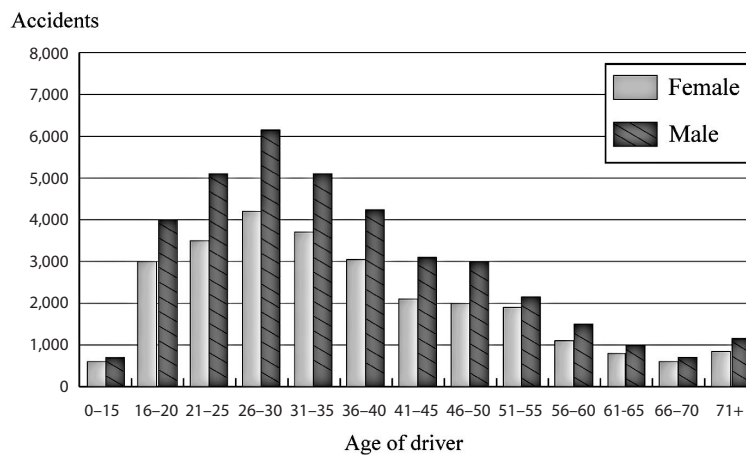


#### Who is involved?

(i) In 1998, 71% of drivers involved in injury accidents were male. The 1995/97 National Travel Survey (NTS) estimates that 72% of all vehicle mileage of men is as the driver of a car, while the corresponding figure for women was just 40%. The NTS also shows that 57% of full car driving licence holders are male.

(ii) 24% of drivers involved in accidents were aged between 16 and 25.

Figure 2: Injury Accidents by Age and Sex of Driver



Source: Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 1998

## Stereotypes of Women Drivers

The question of how or why certain stereotypes exist has been the subject of a number of investigations in the social sciences. Amongst these, the common perception that women lack the ability to drive well has been widely studied.

Michael Berger's essay 'Women Drivers' (1986) argues that women have always been ascribed qualities that conjure up an image of fragile femininity, rendering them incapable of taking care of themselves. Their delicate physical and emotional constitution, their inability to make quick decisions in crisis situations and the belief that their place is in the home, caring for husband and children, have led society to perceive women as being incapable of undertaking the responsibility of driving. These stereotypical representations of women were, according to Berger, "attempts to keep women in their place and to protect them against corrupting influences in society".

Furnham and Saipe's study 'Personality correlates of convicted drivers' (1993) explored traits that might determine driving behaviour. Their study aimed to investigate whether motoring convictions correlated with specific personality types. They asked 73 males and females, aged between 19 and 61, to complete a number of questionnaires on driving habits and convictions. 25 males and 25 females stated that they had no driving convictions, whilst 18 males and 5 females admitted having driving convictions.

One of the questionnaires tried to elicit information on the participant's desire to take part in activities that had elements of speed or danger. From these results, Furnham and Saipe concluded that convicted drivers' scores correlated with higher scores on thrill and adventure seeking. One particular group, young male participants with fewer years of driving experience, scored more highly on thrill and adventure seeking, and had more convictions, than females of a similar age. The findings of the study demonstrated that men were more likely to have driving convictions than women. As a consequence, the study concludes that women, in some respects, are better drivers than men.

In his 1941 study, "Factors underlying illusory self-assessment of driving skill in males and females", McKenna asked 99 participants, between the ages of 18 and 61, to assess their driving skills. The participants were asked to make judgements of their own driving skills and of the driving skills of the average driver in 20 different scenarios. The study concluded that there was a significant difference between males' and females' assessment of their own driving skills. Male participants rated themselves as more advanced drivers than females in different situations. Of the 20 scenarios, four in particular proved significant: reversing, parking, judging width of vehicles, and driving in an unfamiliar area. By females, these were given similar ratings for both their own driving skills and for those of the average driver, whereas males rated their personal skills as more advanced than the average.

Consequently, the results of the study suggest that men are more likely to have a higher self-assessment of their driving skills than women, though men and women have basically the same perception of the average driver. There may be an explanation of why men and women perceive themselves as adequate or exceptional drivers. One suggested by Arkoff (1993) states that in our society men tend to look at good qualities and apply these to themselves, whilst women do the reverse and give credit to others. This suggests that men, in general, have a tendency to be overconfident of their skills, whereas women play down their abilities

Source: original, October 2002

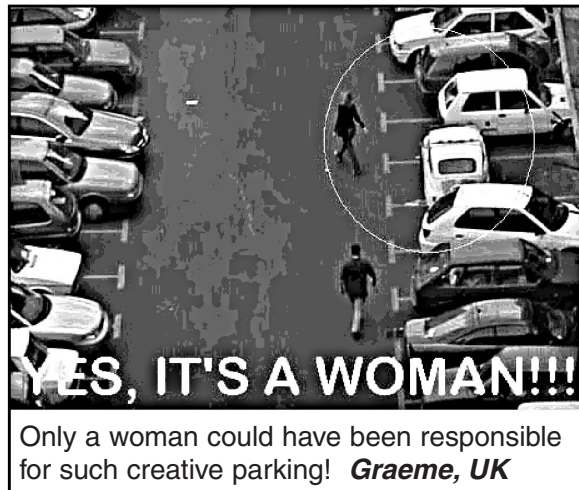
# BBC NEWS

## BBC TALKING POINT

Following the ASA ruling, the BBC invited members of the public to express their views on the debate about women drivers on their Talking Point website. Below is a selection of those comments:

Women are certainly safer drivers but that is because they drive in less challenging conditions and take fewer risks: they rarely drink and drive; rarely go above the minimum recommended speed applicable to the road conditions, tyre conditions, visibility etc; and rarely get distracted by a really sexy girl, whilst listening to some blaring music on their super car stereo. But are women better drivers? I think not. **Eric, UK**

Sad to think that there is even a need for this discussion. There are indeed good drivers and poor drivers – what does it matter what sex they are? Haven't we got beyond the "I am Tarzan, you are Jane" phase yet? Political correctness obviously hasn't quite filtered through. I like to think of myself as competent (don't we all?), but that doesn't mean to say that I don't commit faults whilst driving. We all do. Mind you, I don't get much opportunity living in a country where women aren't allowed to drive! **Josephine, Saudi Arabia**



With men it's a 'pride thing'. Take parking for example. If a woman tries to get into a tricky spot and can't then she's just a typically bad woman driver, but if a man does the same thing, then it's "bad luck mate, that was a tricky space to get into". Just as in the workplace, women have to try twice as hard as men and constantly have to prove themselves. **Sarah F, UK**

Women do have lower premiums but they lack the confidence that men seem to have. Although men drive crazy most of the time they appear more confident. But does this make them better drivers? On the whole, if it's one or the other, then yes, it does. **Rob, UK**

Eric, UK, refers to women driving in 'less challenging conditions'. Presumably he hasn't seen a school run recently. But when it comes to parking, give me a man any day. **Andrew, UK**

Women safer than men? Utterly preposterous. Women will never make good drivers because they lack spatial awareness. Since prehistoric times men have been genetically programmed to be aware of their surroundings whilst moving at speed. Failure to do so would mean being eaten by sabre-toothed tigers or the like. This is what makes them superior behind the wheel. Women on the other hand are much more comfortable at home in the cave, keeping the fire going. Having women on the road simply leads to more accidents as they are so unpredictable. **Shaun, UK**

Source: BBC Talking Point website, [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)